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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 000502

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TAGS: MOPS MARR PGOV PREL PTER SY IZ

SUBJECT: MCNS FEBRUARY 17 DISCUSSES IRAQI PSDS, FORCE
GENERATION, AND KOSOVO'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

REF: BAGHDAD 00448

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (S REL UK AS) The weekly MCNS discussed supervision and management of Personal Security Details (PSDs), force generation success for the Ministry of Interior (MOI) forces, needs of the Directorate of Border Enforcement (DBE), security for elections and the approaching visit of Iranian President Ahmedinejad, and Kosovo's declaration of independence, which they agreed to support. End Summary.

PSDs

¶2. (S REL UK AS) MOI presented a report on PSDs with a view towards standardizing personnel selection and vetting, uniforms, salaries, training, and equipment. Deputy Minister al-Asadi noted concerns that PSD members committed crimes, some times portraying themselves as police, some times using police credentials formerly acquired, and some times simply using their weapons and uniforms to convey to citizens that they were police officers. He called for standards of training and equipment as well as distinct uniforms to set them apart from the police. Underpinning this effort would be the establishment of a General Directorate within the MOI for the oversight and direction of PSDs. There are currently 28,000 Iraqi PSD personnel. (Note: All senior GOI officials, members of the Council of Representatives, and GOI employees of the General Director (roughly the Assistant Secretary level) are entitled to a PSD, size determined by

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rank. The PSDs for the members of the Presidency Council, the PM, and the Ministers were not under discussion, only PSDs for deputy ministers and below. End note.)

¶3. (S REL UK AS) During the discussion that ensued, several difficult issues marred the general consensus that the regulations governing PSDs need to be standardized and that PSDs should be overseen by the MOI. The funding issue was discussed at length, raising the question of whether all PSDs would be on the MOI payroll or on the payroll of the respective ministry or other GOI institutions whose members the PSD was protecting. Also, D/MOI raised the issue of the PSD personnel being on contract or hired into the MOI as a pool of certified, professional protective services personnel. This led to a question of selection of PSDs personnel, with D/PM Barham Salih noting that at this time of insecurity, many protected persons would not put their faith in PSD personnel drawn from a pool of MOI-approved personnel, but would insist on relatives or trusted friends to protect them. All agreed that this could lead to a constant growth

of PSDs, as protected persons hired PSD personnel then stepped down from office, losing their PSD entitlement but leaving behind an ever growing number of "certified" personnel. At the same time, all recognized the greater difficulty in recruiting for a standing force of PSD personnel using contracts vice a job with benefits in the MOI. D/PM Barham Salih indicated that a blend of personally selected PSD personnel on contracts and MOI-employed PSD personnel receiving pay and benefits somewhat less than police might be the correct solution at this time.

¶4. (S REL UK AS) D/CG LTG Rollo intervened to suggest a way forward. He suggested that the MCNS agree to establish a directorate for PSDs within the MOI, immediately charging the directorate staff to come up with standards for training, uniforms, etc., and to establish procedures for recruiting and vetting personnel. That directorate could then be charged with providing further recommendations on the more contentious issues for later submission to MCNS. After further discussion, including who would have the right to monitor PSDs' activities, the PM wrapped up the discussion. He instructed the MOI to begin forming the directorate and establishing procedures to monitor the PSDs and standardize practices. He indicated his support for recruiting a GOI-funded personal protective service in this new MOI directorate, whose members would be salaried and have employment benefits, alongside the continuation of personally recruited PSD personnel who would be on contracts and without all the benefits of the MOI-engaged PSD personnel.

Targeting Pilgrims

¶5. (S REL UK AS) MOI presented information revealing that the Yamani group in Najaf was threatening visitors, in particular Iranians. They, the Yamani group, were planning a

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diversionary attack away from Karbala, but the real attack would be on pilgrims in Karbala. Iraqi security forces would take steps to protect the pilgrims. The PM noted that he had been told that motorcades were being used to smuggle weapons into an area, including motorcades of Council of Representatives members. This must be stopped.

Ahmedinejad Visit Security

¶6. (S REL UK AS) Foreign Minister Zebari reported that Iranian President Ahmedinejad's itinerary had been changed, dropping visits to Najaf and Karbala for security reasons. PM Maliki underlined the distinct importance of there being no harm done to Ahmedinejad and no problems with the visit. Everyone agreed.

Kosovo Independence

¶7. (S REL UK AS) Zebari noted that Kosovo would soon announce independence and that the United States and the European Union would support it and would like to know Iraq's position. Maliki led the MCNS in expressing support for the self-determination of the Kosovars and the establishment of a free, democratic Muslim state. (Note: After the meeting, A/DCM C. Ries clarified with the PM that while the MCNS could voice its support, only the cabinet had the authority to recognize Kosovo's independence. PM told A/DCM that the cabinet would likely do so on Tuesday, February 19. In the event, however, the cabinet did not act on February 19, we were told the ministers wanted to wait for an Arab League Conference. End note.)

MOI Force Generation Report

¶8. (S REL UK AS) The MOI and his deputies presented a

briefing on the success over the last year in force generation and equipping the Iraqi Police Service (IPS), National Police (NP), Department of Border Enforcement (DBE), Facilities Protection Service (FPS) and HQ staff. (See para. 9 for details.) Minister Bolani did not shy away from outlining challenges to be overcome, highlighting problems with fuel for vehicles and generators for police facilities. He also noted that many of the police should go through remedial training to compensate for the quick, basic training they had had as MOI rushed to fill staffing gaps. This will take time, as there are tens of thousands to be cycled through re-training to bring all police officers up to the same minimum. He stressed that many vehicles remained to be delivered, but that there had been significant progress over the last year in providing MOI units with the vehicles needed to perform their roles. D/PM Barham Salih, while acknowledging that there remains much to do to foster the readiness and capacity of MOI forces, saluted the progress made, noting that it was a large achievement and "we've made great strides."

¶ 9. (S REL UK AS) MOI force generation approximate numbers:
--the total MOI authorized staffing is 420,000
--as of January 2008, staffing had reached 380,000, up 70 percent from 225,000 in December 2005
--IPS has reached 243,000 of 271,000 authorized
--NP has reached 33,000 of 27,000 authorized
--DBE has reached 40,000 of 46,000 authorized
--FPS has reached 19,000 of 20,000 authorized
--HQ staff has reached 44,000 of 48,000 authorized

Department of Border Enforcement

¶ 10. (S REL UK AS) The Director of Border Enforcement, MG Mohsen, outlined the needs of DBE and its progress to date in meeting its obligations. He presented a three-year plan that included spending on 200 border forts, headquarters buildings, wells, roads, aircraft, training academies. He noted that the requirements cut across several ministries. In the discussion that followed MOI Bolani asserted that DBE needed 55,000 officers. He also raised the question of how many Ports of Entry (POEs) there should be and whether such a large number of POEs facilitated smuggling and other illegal activity through the POEs. The PM observed that there certainly a great deal of smuggling going on and that DBE needs the resources to do its job. He did not seem to endorse the idea of reducing the number of POEs. In response to a request for more resources he said firmly that they should do the best they can within their existing budget and make a bid for the supplemental.

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Electoral Security

¶ 11. (S REL UK AS) D/MOI al-Asadi gave a very short brief on security preparations already underway for provincial elections that could take place in October. The Iraqi Police Service was making preparations to protect facilities, election officers, and the voters. The PM suggested that elections be held serially so that security forces could concentrate on a few provinces at a time.

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